

Regional Interagency Coordinating Committee

Minutes from 11-30-06

1. Welcome/Introductions

Present: Roxane Romanick, Sandy McMerty, Anna Bergman, Jody Bettger-Huber, Debra Tibor, Becky Severt, Vicki Peterson, Dorothy Larson, Michelle Ragan, Annette Hoff, Judy DeWitz, Rick Rask, Carlotta McCleary, Florestine Grant, Tracy Wanner, Michelle Hougen, Cherie Mortenson, Mike Schwab, Vivian Schafer

2. Minutes

Jody Bettger-Huber made a motion to approve the Minutes with no changes. Seconded by Michelle Ragan. MOTION PASSED.

3. Member Updates/Membership Review

- Members list - Kari Kramer's name was added as an ad hoc member. Kari is the program coordinator for Easter Seals.
- Report from Vicki Peterson:
 - She is working really hard to get the Combating Autism Act passed at the federal level. It is not looking hopeful for the inclusion of research on environmental impact.
 - She is also doing a lot of work on the Life Span Respite Act. She got a letter published in the ASA edition which will come out next month. This is an act written by Hillary Clinton in 2005 to provide state or local nonprofit organizations to get grants for 5 years to provide a national database for respite care and training and to provide funds for respite care. She sat in on the National Health Congress conference call this past week and that was a topic of discussion there.
- Report from Dorothy Larson
 - They still have no computers but she got a call from Barb King so the computers should be close to coming.
 - There are 11 kids currently in the Standing Rock referral process. They are doing a lot of three year old transitions
 - The Tribal Council is working on contracting with a psychologist part time 3 days/week to work with families reservation wide for birth-5 on behavior problems, etc.
- Report from Vivian Schafer

- Education bill - the Department of Health is proposing a bill for 3 million dollars to put school nursing in schools doing health plans, consultations, etc.
 - Report from Mike Schwab
 - FOA (Family Opportunity Act) and Medically Fragile Waiver - department has put both those programs into one optional adjustment request (OAR). There is 2.4 million dollars for FOA and 1.5 million dollars for medically fragile. An OAR is additional funding that the Department of Human Services wishes that they had, but it not currently funded in the governor's budget.
 - Report from Roxane Romanick
 - new Transition Guidelines were passed around for members to look at. It should also be available through the EI website.
 - training in December in EI on monitoring requirements so that the state can put out a tool to actually look at components of IFSP - state proposing they will look at portion of our IFSP and review them
 - Dec. 14 & 15 - the state is rolling out new Regional QIP. Lelord will e-mail out the time for training on December 15th for anyone wanting to attend. The new Regional QIP will totally change our current format.
4. BECEP Right Track Status Report
- Jody Bettger-Huber gave an overview of the Right Track program to the new members. Funding - Right Track serves 17% of the children so they received 17% of the funding. Prioritization of families was looked at. The RPF will be due next July. Mike Schwab asked if there was a big difference in the number of individuals served. Jody said because of the number of home visits we were able to do, we had to start limiting how many home visits were done. Right Track still has three full time staff and four consultants. Jody said with the funding change they have tried to also use phone assessments instead of home visits to families. Letters have also been sent out to families.
 - Right Track is also being more involved in hearing screenings through North Dakota Early Detection Hearing Impairment. Right Track's role is to call the families to see if they have had problems getting hearing

screenings completed once a child has failed their newborn screenings prior to discharge from the hospital.

5. BECEP Infant Development Program Report

- BECEP EI Data Report handout was distributed.

Michelle Hougen - BECEP Program Report

Mike Ahmann, Executive Director for BECEP, Michelle Hougen, and Keith Gustafson, also a Special Ed director (director of four Infant Development programs in the state) met with Yvonne Smith, Director of Disability Services (Infant Development is a program under this catchment) and Deb Balsdon, Part C Coordinator and responsible for the state Infant Development portfolio. Infant Development programs across the state are reporting problems with funding issues.

The majority of programs are not being reimbursed the amount of money needed to keep staff recruited, hired, and working to serve the number of kids are supposed to be served. The unit rate that gets reimbursed is equal to one child in the program five days/week (ex: 22 days in a month we would get reimbursed for each child 14.78×22). Presently, the amount of reimbursement is not based on the amount of service. The program gets reimbursed the same amount for every eligible child. When a program figures their budget they base it on the average number of children that is served in a month. The budget that BECEP submitted this year was \$152,000 more than what was granted by the state office. The meeting included a discussion of a payment structure that would be based on a fee for service versus the current unit rate system. The unit rate differs in every Infant Development program. Infant Development grantees are expressing concern regarding their ability to continue to manage the programs without a change in the funding strategy/mechanisms and the amount of reimbursement. BECEP had to decrease the time of two staff this fall. This was due in part to operating without a budget for 2006-07 until September (fiscal year starts July 1). This issue is also part of the discussion during the meetings with the state office.

Michelle reported that the next step is that Yvonne, Deb, Mark, and Karen Larson noted that they would meet to try to come up with a better funding formula and a joint meeting with the Infant Development directors should be on December 14th or 15th. Vivian asked if there is any way some of this

could go under education in DPI. Michelle said not currently. It is totally funded under birth-3 children with disabilities under the Department of Human Services which the legislature decided in 1970s.

Carlotta McCleary asked if the providers have to go to an hourly rate or a fee for service, can the rate be figured out realistically? Michelle said that is one of the things Deb is working on now. Carlotta suggested coming up with our own estimation of cost. She recommended that the directors get together and come up with what they think the rate should be based on the needs of the programs and current market rates. Michelle there is a very complicated formula for determining what your program will be funded. It goes back to the 2002 legislative session and then they pull in so many other things. Carlotta added to get the figures in real terms and actual costs.

Mike Schwab asked if there is any type of legislative plan that is being considered. Roxane said that there are no current plans. Michelle H. reported when they had their meeting with Deb and Yvonne, the comment was made that Infant Development is the one of few groups in the state that does not have some type of organized advocacy plan.

6. Discussion - Solution/Action

Suggestions from the group included the following

- Find legislative advocates; form a legislative task force to look at the issues and work independently of the department since they cannot get involved with legislative action. It was noted that child related topics are hot legislative topics right now.
- Keep families informed and involved at every aspect. Let EI families know about the current issues.
- Get the media involved and target key legislators.
- Consider what the national averages of caseloads are in comparing service reimbursement.
- Emergency legislative action can be considered if funding is a concern in this present biennium and there is a threat of the loss of providers. Rick Rask noted that some entities have already started to discontinue a service, for example providers for diapers (Osco Drugs) have pulled out because they are losing money due to the rate of reimbursement from Medicaid being so low. The only way to change that is to change the reimbursement.

- Target legislators that have special needs children or are affected in some way
- Identify a group that can notify parents about what is happening and current issues and concerns, set up an e-mail network to let families know what is happening. Judy DeWitz noted that through the Legislative Working Committees, Protection and Advocacy sends out update and families can certainly get added to that list.
- Work on actual costs needed for a budget prior to the meeting with the state office on the 14th.
- If thinking about legislative action, need to consider who might be approached with legislation because legislators can only sponsor so many bills. Try to target legislators that are on appropriations committees. Information presented should be simple.
- Recommend considering a long term plan and not just for this one time appropriation.
- Important for all Infant Development directors to be on board with any legislative action and/or with proposals to the state office. This group has not worked together formally in the past.
- Consider communication between the RICC and between the NDICC and the RICC's.
- Set up a way that families can sign on in support of any action.
- It was suggested to informally appoint a committee. A sign up sheet was passed around for anyone interested in signing up.
- Vivian Schafer shared that the Children's Caucus will be having their Friday meetings during the legislature and anyone is welcome. It is at 4:00 in the NDEA building on 4th and Thayer. She will send information to Roxane.

7. Set meeting dates for 2007

Dorothy = Thursdays bad days

Michelle - Wednesdays bad

Tuesdays are good

Meetings set for 3rd Tuesday of month - next meeting will be in February

8. Adjourn